

Parts of the Trunk:

Inside the trunk of a tree are a number of rings. Each year of the tree's life a new ring is added so many people refer to them as the annual rings. The rings are actually made up of different parts:

Bark: The outside layer of the trunk, branches and twigs of trees. The bark serves as a protective layer for the more delicate inside wood of the tree. Trees actually have inner bark and outer bark -- the inner layer of bark is made up of living cells and the outer layer is made of dead cells, sort of like our fingernails.

The scientific name for the inner layer of bark is Phloem. The main job of this inner layer is to carry sap full of sugar from the leaves to the rest of the tree.

A number of handy things are made from bark including latex, cinnamon and some kinds of poisons. Because bark is a protective layer for the tree, keeping it safe from insects and animals, it isn't surprising the strong flavours, scents and toxins can often be found in the bark of different types of trees.

Cambium: The thin layer of living cells just inside the bark is called cambium. It is the part of the tree that makes new cells allowing the tree to grow wider each year.

Sapwood (Xylem): The scientific name for sapwood is xylem. It is made up of a network of living cells that bring water and nutrients up from the roots to the branches, twigs and leaves. It is the youngest wood of the tree -- over the years, the inner layers of sapwood die and become heartwood.

Heartwood: The heartwood is dead sapwood in the center of the trunk. It is the hardest wood of the tree giving it support and strength. It is usually darker in colour than the sapwood.

Pith: Pith is the tiny dark spot of spongy living cells right in the center of the tree trunk. Essential nutrients are carried up through the pith. It's placement right in the center means it is the most protected from damage by insects, the wind or animals.

